

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of teleconferencing among a plurality of user sites, comprising the steps of:

5 storing a common set of data objects in a plurality of digital computers, each of the digital computers located at a respective user site and having a memory for data object storage and a monitor for data object display, wherein the storing step occurs prior to a teleconference among the user sites;

10 interconnecting the plurality of user sites into the teleconference via a network;

at an individual user site, selecting a data object from the common set of data objects and
15 transmitting an audible signal to the other user sites via the network to indicate the selected data object; and

20 at each of the other user sites, receiving the audible signal and displaying the selected data object on the respective digital computer monitor in response to having received the audible signal.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein the data objects comprise image data.

- 25 3. The method of Claim 1 further comprising the step of at each user site, transmitting and receiving voice communications signals to and from other user sites via the network.

4. The method of Claim 3 further comprising the steps of
at a user site, recording audible signals and voice
communications signals; playing the recording at a
subsequent time; and displaying selected data objects
5 on the respective digital computer monitor in response
to the recorded audible signals.

5. A method of teleconferencing among a plurality of user
sites, comprising the steps of:

10 storing a common set of data objects in a host
digital computer having a memory for data object
storage;

connecting the plurality of user sites to the
host digital computer via a central station;

15 transmitting the common set of data objects from
the host digital computer to a plurality of user
digital computers, each of the user digital computers
located at a respective user site and having a memory
for data object storage and a monitor for data object
display, wherein the storing, connecting, and
20 transmitting steps occur prior to a teleconference
among the user sites;

interconnecting the plurality of user sites into
the teleconference via the central station;

25 at an individual user site, selecting a data
object from the common set of data objects and
transmitting an audible signal to the other user sites
via the central station to indicate the selected data
object; and

30 at each of the other user sites, receiving the
audible signal and displaying the selected data object
on the respective digital computer monitor in response
to having received the audible signal.

6. The method of Claim 5 wherein the data objects comprise image data.

7. The method of Claim 5 further comprising the step of at each user site, transmitting and receiving voice communications signals to and from other user sites via the central station.

8. The method of Claim 7 further comprising the steps of at a user site, recording audible signals and voice communications signals; playing the recording at a subsequent time; and displaying selected data objects on the respective digital computer monitor in response to the recorded audible signals.

9. Apparatus for teleconferencing among a plurality of user sites, comprising:

a plurality of digital computers, each digital computer storing a common set of data objects prior to a teleconference and located at a respective user site and having a memory for data object storage and a monitor for data object display;

a network for interconnecting the plurality of user sites into the teleconference; and
at each user site,

(i) means for selecting a data object from the common set of data objects;

(ii) a tone generator for transmitting an audible signal indicating the selected data object to the other user sites via the network;

(iii) a tone receiver for receiving the audible signal, the selected data object being displayed on the respective digital computer monitor in response to having received the audible signal.

10. The apparatus of Claim 9 wherein each user site further comprises a telephony circuit for transmitting and receiving voice communications signals to and from other user sites via the network.
- 5 11. The apparatus of Claim 9 wherein the data objects comprise image data.
12. Apparatus for teleconferencing among a plurality of user sites, comprising:
- 10 a host digital computer for storing a common set of data objects and having a memory for data object storage;
- a central station for interconnecting the plurality of user sites and the host digital computer into a teleconference;
- 15 a plurality of digital computers, each digital computer located at a respective user site and having a memory for data object storage and a monitor for data object display, the common set of data objects being transmitted from the host digital computer to each user digital computer prior to the
- 20 teleconference; and
- at each user site,
- (i) means for selecting a data object from the common set of data objects;
- 25 (ii) a tone generator for transmitting an audible signal indicating the selected data object to the other user sites via the central station;
- (iii) a tone receiver for receiving the audible signal, the selected data object being
- 30 displayed on the respective digital computer monitor in response to having received the audible signal.

13. The apparatus of Claim 12 wherein each user site further comprises a telephony circuit for transmitting and receiving voice communications signals to and from other user sites via the central station.
- 5 14. The apparatus of Claim 13 wherein a user site further comprises a recorder for recording audible signals and voice communications signals and playback means for playing the recording at a subsequent time; and
10 wherein selected data objects are displayed on the respective digital computer monitor in response to the recorded audible signals.
15. A method of teleconferencing among a plurality of user sites, comprising the steps of:
interconnecting a first set of user sites via a
15 central station;
selecting a subset of the first set of user sites to form a second set of user sites;
interconnecting the second set of user sites via the central station;
20 attenuating communications signals from the first set of user sites; and
connecting the attenuated communications signals to the second set of user sites.
- 25 16. The method of Claim 15 wherein the communications signals include voice communications signals and audible conferencing signals.
- 30 17. A method of teleconferencing among a plurality of user sites, comprising the steps of:
storing a common set of data objects in a plurality of digital computers, each of the digital computers located at a respective user site and having

a memory for data object storage and a monitor for data object display, wherein the storing step occurs prior to a teleconference among the user sites;

5 interconnecting the plurality of user sites into the teleconference via a network;

10 at an individual user site, selecting a data object from the common set of data objects and transmitting a conference control signal to the other user sites via the network to indicate the selected data object; and

15 at each of the other user sites, receiving the conference control signal and displaying the selected data object on the respective digital computer monitor in response to having received the conference control signal.

18. The method of Claim 17 wherein the data objects comprise image data.

20 19. The method of Claim 17 further comprising the step of at each user site, transmitting and receiving voice communications signals to and from other user sites via the network.